

Montana Today: A Geographical Study Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6–8

Enduring Understandings

Geography shapes our lives.

Objectives

Students will

- Create, explore, and interpret maps of Montana to gather information.
- Use inquiry to understand more about the state.
- Use maps and other sources to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their environmental characteristics.
- Explore how environmental and cultural characteristics influence population distribution.
- Learn about Montana’s three regions.
- Identify Montana Indian Reservations.
- Practice summarizing information.
- Read to answer questions.

Time: 2-3 days

Content Standards

Common Core ELA Standards, Montana Social Studies Standards, and Essential Understandings regarding Montana Indians:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively ...
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.10 Write routinely...
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions...
- MCSS 3.1 Analyze and use various

representations of the Earth ... to gather and compare information about a place.

- MSSS 3.2 Locate on a map or globe physical features...

C3 Framework:

- D2.Geo.1.3-5 Construct maps and other graphic representations of both familiar and unfamiliar places.
- D2.Geo.2.3-5 Use maps ... to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their environmental characteristics
- D2.Geo.6.3-5 Describe how environmental and cultural characteristics influence population distribution in specific places or regions.
- D2.Geo.7.3-5 Explain how cultural and environmental characteristics affect the distribution and movement of people, goods, and ideas.
- D2.Geo.8.3-5 Explain how human settlements and movements relate to the locations and use of various natural resources.

Materials

- An outline map showing Montana counties, one map per student or outline maps of counties by region (see below)
- Analyze the Map Worksheet (see below)
- County population data: [Download](http://ceic.mt.gov/Data) information from <http://ceic.mt.gov/Data> (if link is broken, search “Montana population by county” or the CEIC website)
- Projector
- *Montana Stories of the Land*, (if your school does not have copies of this textbook, you can find PDFs of the chapters at our website.

[Chapter 1](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/StoriesOfTheLand/Part1/Chapter1) is at <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/StoriesOfTheLand/Part1/Chapter1> and [Chapter 22](https://mhs.mt.gov/education/StoriesOfTheLand/Part4/Chapter22) is at <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/StoriesOfTheLand/Part4/Chapter22>.

- Colored pencils
- Pens, pencils, paper
- Timer

Pre-Lesson Preparation

- Review the lesson plan and gather the materials listed above in the “Materials” section.
- Decide if each student will create his or her own map, if you will have two students working on one map, or if you will have students working in groups of three.
- Print out and make copies of the Outline Map of Montana Counties. If student will be working in pairs, enlarge the map by 120 percent and print it on legal size paper. If students are working in groups of three, print and make copies of the Counties by Region maps. Precut the maps so the counties will join together while leaving any margin that doesn’t abut another county.
- Download and prepare to project county population data.

Procedure

Step 1: “Write Your Way In” (5 minutes)

1. Ask students to take out a pencil and their writing journals, or a sheet of paper, and date it. Let them know that they will be thinking hard and writing for five minutes nonstop, as soon as you say, “Go!” You will be using a timer and they must keep on going, not lifting their pencils until the five minutes are up. If they are stuck for what to write next, encourage them to write, “I am thinking!” until they think of more to say. Remind them they can use their imaginations! Create a sense of urgency! For this exercise, they should not be concerned with their spelling, etc. They should just think and pour out their thoughts on paper.
2. Provide students with the following prompt: “What do you know about Montana?”

3. When the timer goes off at the end of five minutes, tell students to draw a line where they stopped. (Make sure they save their “Write Their Way Ins”.)

Step 2: Create Maps

1. Provide each student (or pair of students) an Outline Map of Montana Counties and project a chart showing population. (If students are working in groups, assign groups of three and give each member of the group a different region.)
2. Review the instructions:
 - a. Color all the counties with 50,000 or more people blue.
 - b. Color all the counties with between 10,000 and 49,999 people green.
 - c. Color all the counties with between 5,000 and 9,999 people light brown or tan.
 - d. Color all the counties with more than 1,500 and 4,999 yellow.
 - e. Leave all the counties with less than 1,500 white.
3. If students worked with the Counties by Region maps, have them join their maps together after they finish coloring. (Have students put scrap paper behind their maps before taping the front of the map. Then tape the scrap paper to the back of the map to reinforce the join.)

Step 3: Analyze Maps

1. Project or distribute the Analyzing the Map worksheet.
2. Have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class to complete the worksheet.
 - a. Circulate and help students as needed. If students are working independently or in pairs or small groups, pause after they’ve

answered the first two questions and have them share their answers.

- b. Help students find your county before they answer Question 3.
 - c. Review students' answers to questions 3-6.
 - d. As a class, discuss the questions labeled "For Group Discussion." (Don't give students the answers but let them know that these are the big questions they will continue to explore throughout the unit.)
3. Make sure that students save their maps.

Step 4: Read to Find Out

- 1. Establish the purpose for reading (write on board): How does Montana's climate, geology, and geography affect the lives of Montanans?
- 2. Distribute the note taking worksheets. Tell students that these are a tool to help them learn to summarize information. After they read each section, they are going to write the gist—or most important ideas—on their worksheet. Remind them that they don't have much room, so they'll need to think before they write down their "take away."
- 3. Have students read the following pages of *Montana Stories of the Land*:

Chapter 1, pp. 11-17 ("The Three Ecological Regions of Montana" through the end of the chapter)

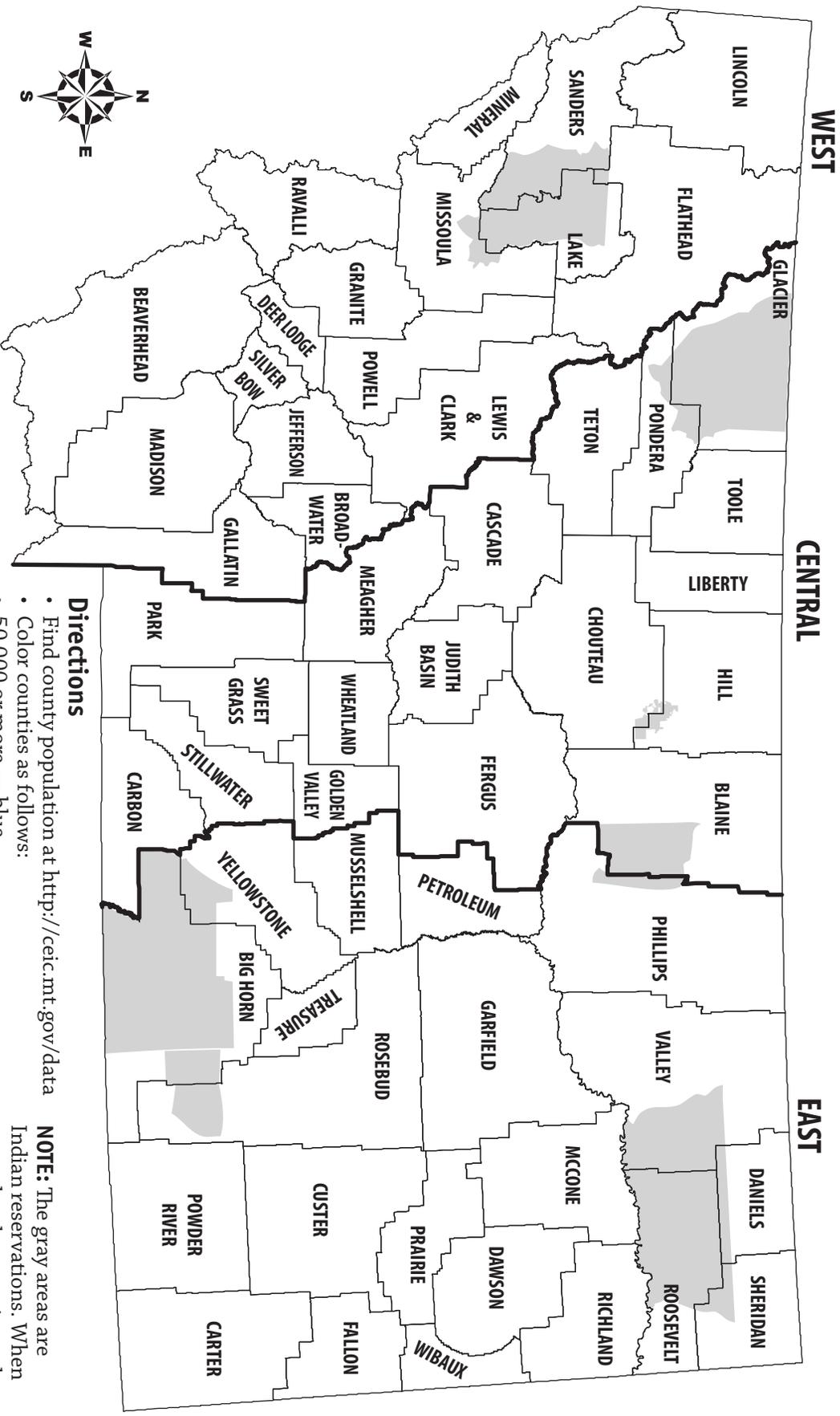
Chapter 22, pp. 440-42 ("Who We Are" and "Our Population Is Aging"), pp. 443-44 ("The Challenges We Face" and "In Butte: A 90-year Boom Ends"), pp. 448-52 ("Rebuilding Montana's Economy" and "Conflict and Compromise over the Land"), and pp. 454-55 ("Modern Montana in Indian Country").

- a. Every fifteen minutes have students stop and pair/share for two minutes, so they can discuss what they think are the most interesting and important things they've read so far and any insights they've gained on the guiding question.
 - b. After students read each section have them complete that section's space on their worksheet.
4. Discuss as a class: How does Montana's climate, geology, and geography affect your life?
5. Return to their map worksheets and give students an opportunity to use their new knowledge to revise or expand their answer to question 6.

Seven Montana Reservations/Twelve Tribal Nations



Name: _____



Directions

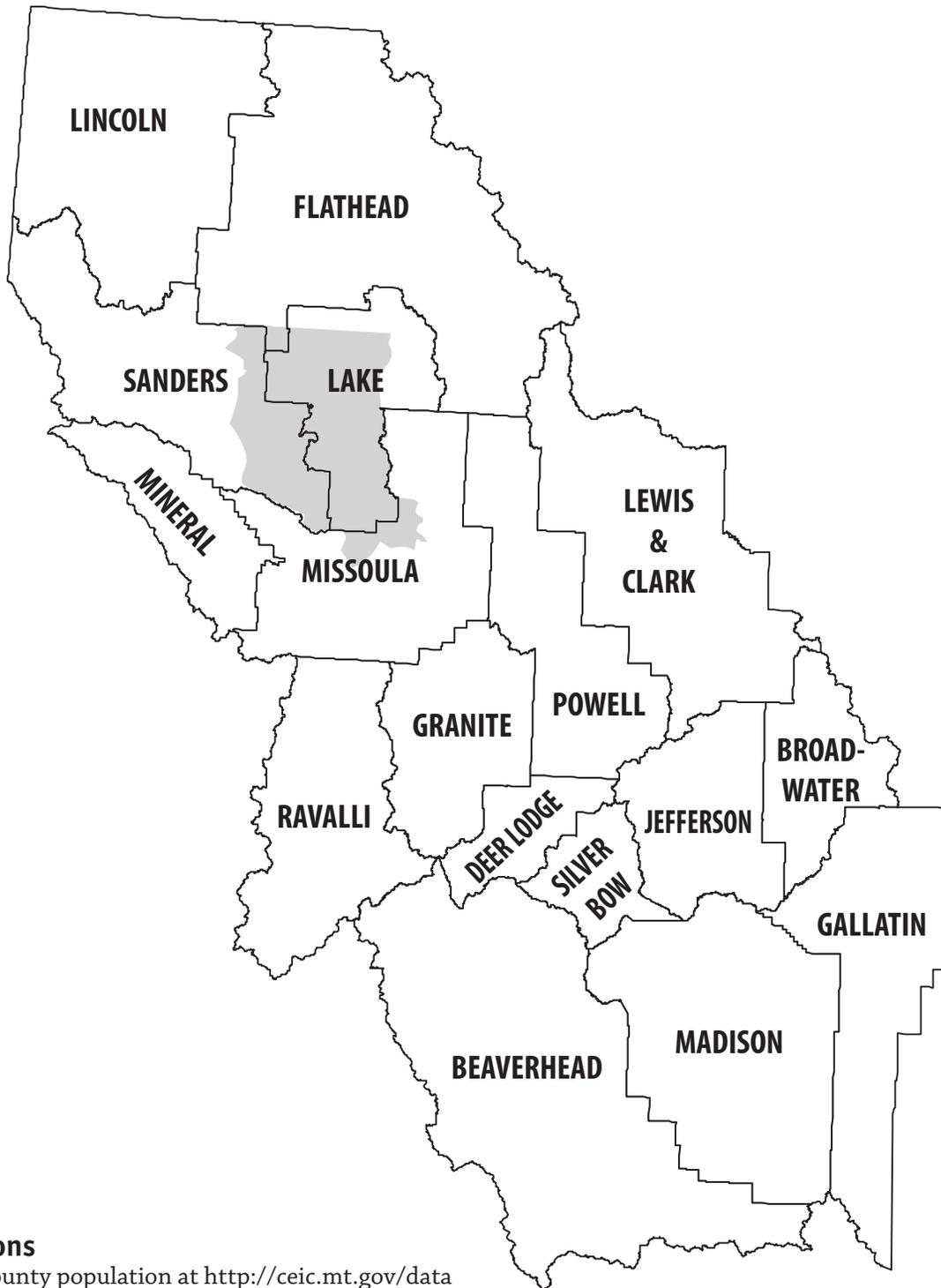
- Find county population at <http://ceic.mt.gov/data>
- Color counties as follows:
 - 50,000 or more — blue
 - 10,000 to 49,999 — green
 - 5,000 to 9,999 — light brown
 - 1,500 to 4,999 — yellow
 - 0 to 1,499 — white

NOTE:

The gray areas are Indian reservations. When you color the counties, color over the reservations, but make sure to let the gray show through.

Western

Name: _____



Directions

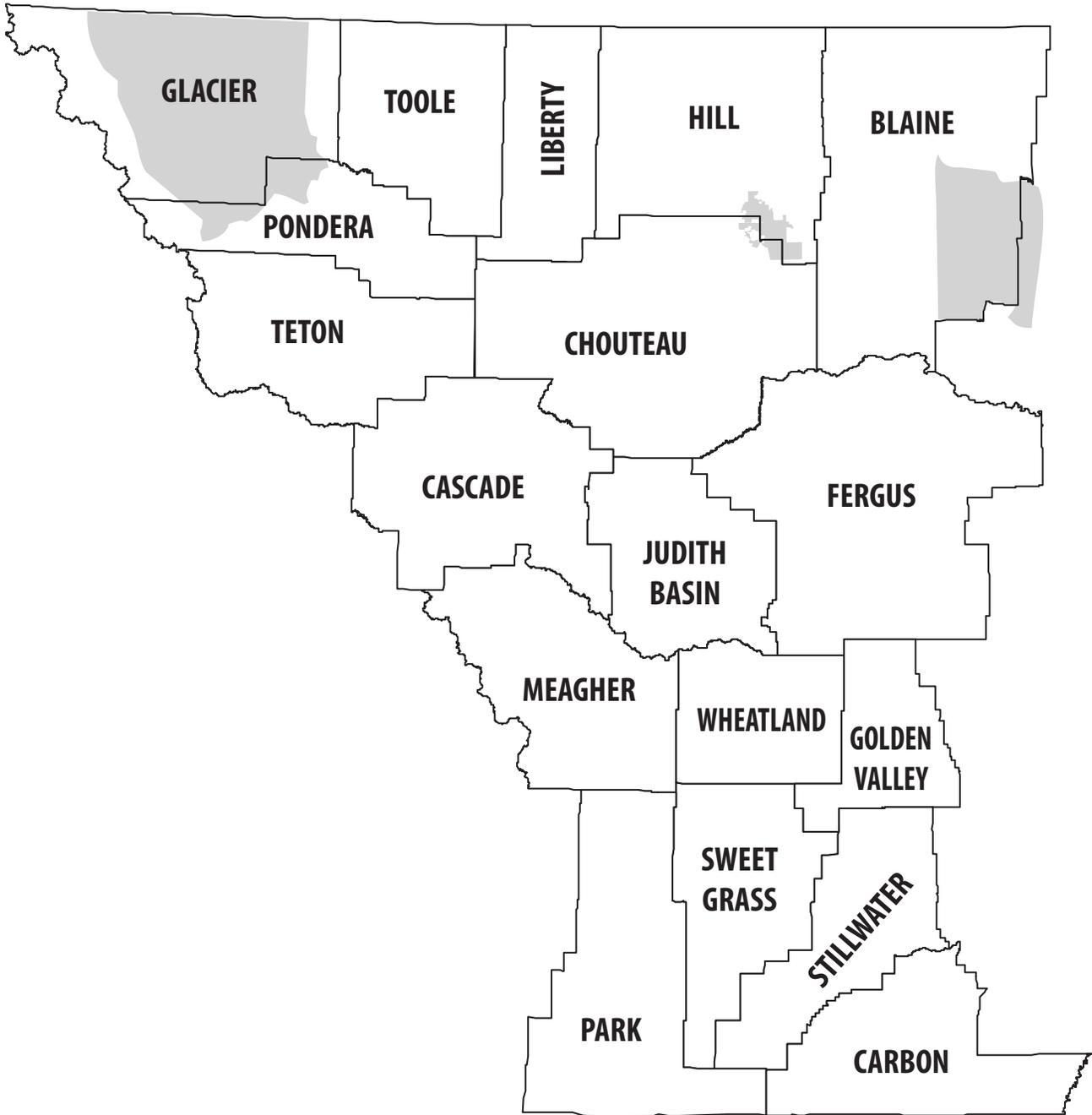
- Find county population at <http://ceic.mt.gov/data>
- Color counties as follows:
- 50,000 or more — blue
- 10,000 to 49,999 — green
- 5,000 to 9,999 — light brown
- 1,500 to 4,999 — yellow
- 0 to 1,499 — white

NOTE: The gray areas are Indian reservations. When you color the counties, color over the reservations, but make sure to let the gray show through.



Central

Name: _____



Directions

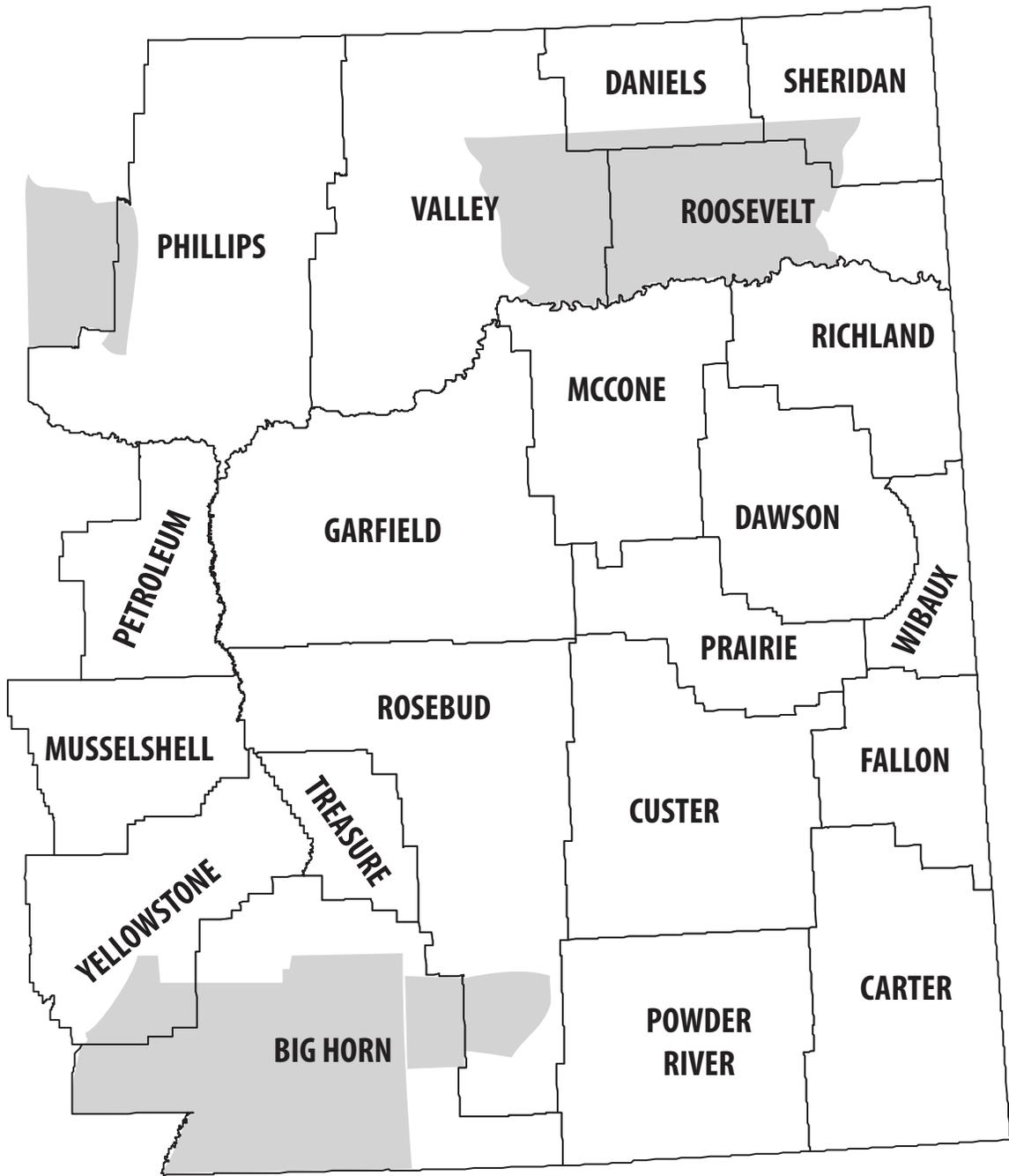
- Find county population at <http://ceic.mt.gov/data>
- Color counties as follows:
- 50,000 or more — blue
- 10,000 to 49,999 — green
- 5,000 to 9,999 — light brown
- 1,500 to 4,999 — yellow
- 0 to 1,499 — white

NOTE: The gray areas are Indian reservations. When you color the counties, color over the reservations, but make sure to let the gray show through.



Eastern

Name: _____



Directions

- Find county population at <http://ceic.mt.gov/data>
- Color counties as follows:
- 50,000 or more — blue
- 10,000 to 49,999 — green
- 5,000 to 9,999 — light brown
- 1,500 to 4,999 — yellow
- 0 to 1,499 — white

NOTE: The gray areas are Indian reservations. When you color the counties, color over the reservations, but make sure to let the gray show through.



Name: _____

Analyzing the Map

1. Now that you have colored the map, what patterns do you see? What do those patterns make you wonder?
2. Where are the most populated counties (west, central, east)? The least populated?
3. Find your county. What region is it in? What color is it? Is it the same or different from nearby counties?
4. Write the reservation name and the names of the tribes who live there on the sides of your map. Draw a line from the names to the reservation.
5. Place dots in the counties that contain Montana's ten largest cities. Label each dot with the city's name (or if there isn't room, the first letter of the city's name).

Billings: Yellowstone County	Butte: Silver Bow County	Havre: Hill County
Great Falls: Cascade County	Helena: Lewis and Clark County	Miles City: Custer County
Missoula: Missoula County	Kalispell: Flathead County	
Bozeman: Gallatin County	Belgrade: Gallatin County	
6. What relationship do you see between county population and the locations of Montana's largest cities?

For group discussion: Why do you think the highest population centers (cities) are where they are? What does this map suggest about ways that Montana's climate, geology, and geography affect the lives of Montanans?

Name: _____

Read to Find Out Notetaking Worksheet

Instructions: Summarize each section of *Montana: Stories of the Land* as you read it. Remember: you don't have room to write about everything in the section so just choose the most important ideas.

The Three Ecological Regions of Montana (p. 11)

Western Region (pp. 11-12)

Central Region (pp. 13-14)

Eastern Region (pp. 14-15)

A Land of Contrast (pp. 15-16)

Mountains (pp. 15-16)

Rivers (p. 16)

People Rely on the Land (p. 16)

Who We Are (p. 440)

Our Population Is Aging (p. 441)